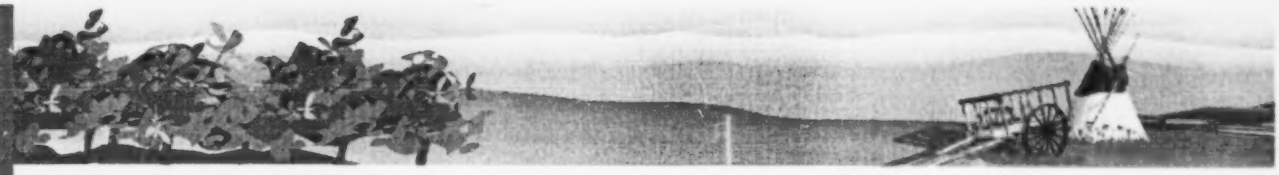
Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development



Update
Summer 2004

Message from the Minister

Welcome to the second edition of the *Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Update*. You will find information about programs the ministry has been involved with and issues and events that have shaped our winter and spring. You will also learn about events and initiatives involving Aboriginal communities around the province.

Our ministry focuses on partnering with other government ministries and stakeholders to strengthen the province's relationships with Aboriginal governments, organizations and communities. We also participate in a variety of interprovincial and national initiatives.

Our ministry is also concentrating its efforts on the North. I envision full participation of Northern Albertans in the province's opportunities and prosperity. Key to this is sustainable development. Through this *Update* we will keep you informed of how we, with the assistance of Northern Alberta Development Council, are addressing our specific priorities of economic diversification, transportation, infrastructure, tourism development, and improving skills among Northern Albertans.

Please feel free to contact my office for more information on any of these programs.

Sincerely,
Honourable Pearl Calahasen
Minister, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development

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Aboriginal Affair's First Ministers Meeting Identifies List of Priorities

On April 3, Western and Territorial Ministers responsible for Aboriginal Affairs met in Calgary to discuss a new approach for engaging the federal government to address Aboriginal issues.

"With the federal government restructuring its approach to focusing on Aboriginal issues the time is now to turn the corner on a new partnership," said Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Minister, Pearl Calahasen. "We all need to work in collaboration with Aboriginal governments and communities, organizations and other stakeholders to improve the quality of life for Aboriginal people."

The Western and Territorial Ministers agreed to advance their priorities with the federal government. They want these priorities to be addressed through cross-jurisdictional collaboration. Priorities identified include: Aboriginal people in urban, territorial and remote communities; affordable and adequate housing; education and early childhood development; and Aboriginal health and well-being.

The Ministers also supported the view of the territorial leaders requesting the federal government respond positively to the federal Auditor General's recommendations on transferring federal responsibilities to the north and honouring the spirit and intent of land claims implementation. Other topics discussed at the meeting included land claims, self-government, Aboriginal consultation and strategies for increasing Aboriginal participation in the economy.

Alberta
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Journey to Success: An Aboriginal Women's Business Planning Guide

On January 29, 2004, the Honourable Pearl Calahasen, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, announced the release of *Journey to Success: An Aboriginal Women's Business Planning Guide*, during the Business and Political Leaders for Women Conference. This announcement was made on behalf of the Honourable Andy Mitchell, Minister of Indian Affairs and Northern Development and the Federal/Provincial/Territorial/ Aboriginal (FPTA) Forum.

The guide reflects input from Aboriginal women across the country, individual entrepreneurs and representatives of Aboriginal women's organizations. Their ideas and advice have been included in this practical and easy-to-use tool for Aboriginal women who are thinking of going into business.

"I am pleased to launch *Journey to Success* on behalf of the FPTA," said Minister Calahasen. "This guide speaks to the needs of Aboriginal women entrepreneurs who want to explore new economic opportunities which will benefit not only them, but their communities as well. I look forward to continuing our work with our partners to support an environment that promotes the well-being and self-reliance of Aboriginal peoples."

Copies of the guide are available from all FTPA partners, INAC's regional offices and through INAC's Contact Centre at (819) 997-0380.

The FPTA Forum is a co-operative process among the federal government, provincial and territorial governments, and six national Aboriginal organizations: the Assembly of First Nations, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami, Métis National Council, Native Women's Association of Canada and Pauktuutit Inuit Women's Association. It provides a unique opportunity for Ministers Responsible for Aboriginal Affairs to meet regularly with national Aboriginal leaders.

View from the North

Expanded Student Funding Supports Northern Health Careers

Bursary funding has expanded for health care students interested in a career in Northern Alberta. The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) is offering new and increased funding through bursary programs that link students to northern employers – especially in health professions.

"Bringing graduates into northern communities is essential to create a sustainable social and economic environment," said Pearl Calahasen, Minister of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development. "I strongly encourage students to choose a northern future and apply for the bursaries."

"The High Level area has experienced a shortage of pharmacists and other areas of the North are facing similar difficulties," said Mike Mihaly, Chair of the NADC Bursary Selection Committee. "We believe the new $6,000 co-sponsored bursary will help local pharmacies attract graduates."

Northern health regions are also working with the Council to increase the number of students taking a practicum in the region. The new Health Care Practicum Placement Funding program helps students with the cost of travel and accommodation. "Once they're here, we can show students how wonderful the region is," said Mihaly. "Health regions see practicums as an excellent recruitment tool."

Each year more than 250 students in business, engineering and other technical programs, education, social services and other fields receive NADC bursaries.

NADC Bursaries

The Northern Alberta Development Council (NADC) has a variety of bursaries available to students who are living in or interested in working in Northern Alberta. Check out the NADC website at www3.gov.ab.ca/nadc/ and click on Bursaries.

Rural Health Week

Health Regions throughout Alberta celebrated the third annual Alberta Rural Health Week June 13-19, 2004. This special week provides community partners with an annual focus to help raise awareness and showcase success stories and the unique positive contributions and skills of rural health professionals and organizations. Rural health services contribute to the quality of life enjoyed by Alberta residents.

Rural health service delivery faces some unique challenges not seen in urban areas – large geographic distances, access to health services, and issues related to recruitment and retention of rural health workers. Despite its challenges, rural health care delivery has many innovations and success stories. Rural Health Week helps highlight those successes.

For more information, visit the Rural Health Week website at www.ruralhealthweek.ab.ca.

Bringing Employers and Aboriginal Communities Together

Minister Calahasen signs the agreement which will promote partnerships with businesses to enhance Aboriginal participation in Alberta's economy

Earlier this year, the Government of Canada and the Government of Alberta signed an agreement promoting partnerships with businesses to enhance the participation of Aboriginal people in the Alberta economy. The two governments will work with individual businesses to identify training, employment and related economic opportunities for Aboriginal people in both the public and private sectors.

This initiative is aimed at providing more information about employment opportunities to Aboriginal communities and organizations. By providing this information in advance, Aboriginal organizations will be better able to develop training plans, intended to lead to the creation of a larger skilled Aboriginal workforce.

Alberta's vision is driven by the *Aboriginal Policy Framework*, which emphasizes collaboration and partnership among Aboriginal people, industry, government and other interested parties to improve the self-reliance of Aboriginal people and communities.

Through this agreement, the parties agree to work with Aboriginal people in the province to facilitate constructive cultural relations; enhance linkages to the Aboriginal labour force; promote employment, retention and career development opportunities for Aboriginal people; identify potential business development initiatives; and develop an action plan laying out both short- and long-term employment strategies.

Increasing the participation of Aboriginal people in the workforce is critical to the growth of the province's economy. By expanding the supply of qualified Aboriginal workers, Alberta will be better able to meet its future labour needs. Additionally, the employment strategy will empower Aboriginal communities by enabling them to focus their training in areas of their choice based on a variety of opportunities gathered through the partnership process.

Funding For Aboriginal Culture Programs in Inner City Schools

A new co-operative effort to improve the educational success of Aboriginal peoples living in central Edmonton received a funding boost from the governments of Canada and Alberta. Representative from both governments and the Edmonton Public School Board were on hand to announce details of the *Achieving Individual Success Through Cultural Pride* initiative, a new $298,000 pilot project that will see Aboriginal culture integrated into the curriculum of seven inner city schools.

The Government of Canada, through Western Economic Diversification Canada, is contributing $224,572 over the next two years towards the pilot project. Additional support for this phase of the project includes $55,000 from the Government of Alberta and an in-kind contribution of $18,260 from Edmonton Public Schools.

"The Province of Alberta is proud to support a wonderful project such as this," said Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Minister Pearl Calahasen. "The integration of cultural awareness into these schools will make Aboriginal culture meaningful and an integral part of the classroom experience for all students."

The pilot project will see a Cultural Facilitator working collaboratively with local teachers to develop a curriculum for language arts, social studies, art and music that is sensitive to the cultural needs of our urban Aboriginal communities. Project partners also hope to develop a new educational model for use by other urban school districts in Alberta and across Canada.

The Alberta Government's funding demonstrates its commitment through the *Aboriginal Policy Framework* to provide the necessary support to community-based agencies to address the needs of Aboriginal peoples living in towns and cities. It also reflects the priorities of Alberta's First Nations, Métis and Inuit Education Policy Framework to enhance Aboriginal learner success and achievement by including Aboriginal perspectives in all grades and subject areas, increasing attendance and graduation rates of Aboriginal learners, and enhancing access to post-secondary education opportunities.

Government Programs

The Alberta Government is involved in many initiatives that benefit Aboriginal and Northern Albertans. A few are described below:

• The **Roundtable on Family Violence and Bullying** identified six key areas for action including: social change; provincial leadership; a collaborative, coordinated community response; services and supports; accountability; and Aboriginal communities.

Some of the comments from Albertans in the consultation summary include: the need to change public awareness and attitudes; putting a priority on early intervention; and having an enhanced cross-government approach.

• The Government of Alberta is providing an additional $30 million over the next two years to support **2005 Centennial initiatives.** The funding includes three programs: $10 million in per capita grants for incorporated municipalities; $16 million for the Alberta Centennial Legacies Grant Program (Phase 3); and $4 million for provincial celebratory activities – including an anticipated Royal Visit in the Centennial year.

• The **Calgary Regional Partnership** (CRP) has received a grant of $699,250 from the Government of Alberta to support the continued development of inter-municipal projects.

The Calgary Regional Partnership was established to identify ways for municipalities to develop and share services for the benefit of residents across the region. Fifteen municipal jurisdictions make up the Regional Partnership, including Airdrie, Okotoks and the Tsuu T'ina Nation.

• The **Keep Your Body in Check** program aims to educate Albertans that healthy eating and regular physical activity are the most important ways to reduce the risk of type 2 diabetes. Aboriginal people are included in the type 2 diabetes high-risk group. This program was launched to reduce the rate of and raise awareness about the most common and preventable form of diabetes in Alberta.

• Transportation, health, research and innovation, water and tourism were some of the topics discussed at a meeting between the co-chairs overseeing the **Alberta-Northwest Territories Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) for Cooperation and Development**.

The Alberta-Northwest Territories Memorandum of Understanding promotes co-operation and development between Alberta and the Northwest Territories. It was originally signed in 1998, and Alberta and the Northwest Territories signed a five-year extension on the MOU. The next MOU meeting is scheduled for the fall of 2003 in Edmonton.

• The new **Edmonton-Grande Prairie SuperNet** Link will help serve 66 communities and over 460 SuperNet service locations. Service locations include 210 schools, 145 provincial government offices, 39 health facilities, 43 libraries and 30 municipal government offices in 66 communities. The completion of this corridor is an important step toward bringing Alberta SuperNet to users in northwestern Alberta.

Community News

Suncor Donation to NAIT

The Suncor Energy Foundation donated $300,000 to the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology's (NAIT) Aboriginal Educational Success Initiative, helping to ensure resources are in place for Aboriginal students as they develop the academic skills necessary to qualify for studies at NAIT.

The Suncor Energy Foundation's gift will go toward NAIT's $4 million Aboriginal Educational Success Initiative, which includes: program development, mobile education units, an Aboriginal Student Centre and student awards.

Esquao Awards

Honouring the strength and beauty of all Aboriginal women, the Esquao Awards, held May 24, were created by IAAW to recognize the outstanding work and recognition of women from Aboriginal communities in helping women of all ages.

Aboriginal women are nominated and awarded for significant accomplishments in the areas of dance, music and performing arts; success obtained through supporting the Aboriginal community; significant work to improve their communities; traditional and non-traditional preservation of culture; and role modeling in the community.

National Aboriginal Awards

Recipients of this year's National Aboriginal Achievement Awards (NAAF) were honoured at a gala awards ceremony in Calgary at the Southern Alberta Jubilee Auditorium on Sunday, April 4, 2004. These awards recognize career achievements by Aboriginal professionals in diverse occupations.

The NAAA was established to build self-esteem and pride for the Aboriginal community and to provide role models for Aboriginal youth. The awards serve to inform of the strides that are being made by individuals who have the discipline, drive and determination to set high standards and accomplish their goals.